

Figures released by the Ministry of Finance, Customs Directorate, indicate a trade deficit of US\$ 1,428 million for Jan-Feb 2020, significantly lower by 36 percent when compared to the deficit of US\$ 2,233 million registered a year earlier. The US\$ 805 million improvement in the trade deficit is mainly rooted in lower imports by US\$ 664 million along with an increase of US\$ 141 million in exports.

Total **imports** reached US\$ 2,105 million during Jan-Feb 2020, decreasing by 24 percent in value terms and by 7 percent in volume terms compared to the same period of 2019.

- Imports of "**Mineral fuel and oil**" rose significantly by 50 percent (US\$ 249 million) while in terms of volume it increased by 41 percent. This surge is mainly rooted in higher EDL fuel imports registering a total of US\$ 255 million in Jan-Feb 2020 compared to nil during the same period of 2019, while non-EDL fuel imports slightly dropped from US\$ 499 million in Jan-Feb 2019 to US\$ 493 million during the same period of 2020.
- Imports of "**Unwrought & semi-manufactured gold, diamonds, precious stones & metals**" witnessed a year-on-year rise of 28 percent (US\$ 45 million) in terms of value, compared to a decline of 49 percent in volume terms, with average gold price increasing to US\$ 1,577 per ounce during Jan-Feb 2020 compared to US\$ 1,305 per ounce during the same period of 2019.
- Excluding "**Mineral fuel and oil**" and "**Unwrought gold, un-mounted diamond & precious stones**", imports decreased by 45 percent (US\$ 958 million) in Jan-Feb 2020 compared to the similar period of 2019. In details, the main decreases were witnessed in "**Vehicles other than railway**", "**Aircraft engines, Boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances**" and "**Electrical machinery and equipment**" with 62 percent (US\$ 115 million)¹, 59 percent (US\$ 109 million)² and 61 percent (US\$ 93 million)³ respectively. These decreases were slightly counterbalanced by an increase of 37 percent (US\$ 17 million)⁴ in imports of "**live animals**".
- Greece and Turkey ranked as Lebanon's top import trading partners in Jan-Feb 2020 with a share of 9 percent of total imports each, noting that almost 96 percent of imports from Greece and 69 percent of imports from Turkey were "**Mineral fuel and oil**". Italy followed with a share of 8 percent.

Exports amounted to US\$ 676 million in Jan-Feb 2020, reflecting a 26 percent rise in value and a 28 percent in volume terms, compared to the same period of 2019.

¹ With lower imports from all countries mainly from Germany by US\$ 22 million, as well as from the United States and Japan by US\$ 19 million and US\$ 16 million respectively.

² This decrease is mainly attributed to lower imports from China by 73 percent (US\$ 33 million), Germany by 73 percent (US\$ 13 million) and France by 81 percent (US\$ 11 million).

³ Imports from China, Finland and Vietnam were the main sources for this drop with respective decreases of US\$ 46 million, US\$ 9 million and US\$ 6 million respectively.

⁴ With imports from Colombia and Republic of Moldova registering US\$ 12 million and by US\$ 4 million respectively compared to nil during the same period last year.

- Exports of "**Unwrought gold, un-mounted diamond & precious stones**" increased significantly by 59 percent (US\$ 117 million) in terms of value during Jan-Feb of 2020, reflected in turn by a 151 percent⁵ increase in terms of volume.
- Excluding "**Unwrought gold, un-mounted diamond & precious stones**", exports increased by a 7 percent (US\$ 23 million) in terms of value. The main export categories witnessing year-on-year increases were "**Iron and steel**" by 215 percent (US\$ 15 million)⁶ and "**Edible fruits and nuts**" by 59 percent (US\$ 8 million)⁷. In contrast, exports of "**Plastics and articles thereof**" dropped by 36 percent (US\$ 9 million)⁸.
- **From a regional perspective**, exports to Arab countries witnessed a rise of 12 percent (US\$ 31 million) in Jan-Feb 2020 compared to the similar period of 2019. It is worth mentioning that this rise is mainly attributed to higher exports to the United Arab Emirates by 47 percent (US\$ 36 million) and Saudi Arabia by 29 percent (US\$ 9 million). These increases were partly counterbalanced by a drop in exports to Syria and Algeria by 48 percent (US\$ 19 million) 67 percent (US\$ 4 million) respectively.
- Lastly, the **breakdown of Lebanese exports by major destination** shows that Switzerland was at the top of the list during Jan-Feb of 2020 with a share of 33 percent of total exports, noting that almost 98 percent of exports to Switzerland were "**Unwrought gold, un-mounted diamond & precious stones**". The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia followed with respective shares of 17 percent and 6 percent each.

⁵ This is mainly attributed to large exports of "Waste and scrap of precious metal or of metal clad" which registered 13,327 Kgs in Jan-Feb of 2020 compared to nil in 2019.

⁶ Mainly due to higher exports to Greece by US\$ 8 million and Egypt by US\$ 6 million.

⁷ With exports to Jordan and Turkey registering US\$ 3 million and by US\$ 2 million respectively compared to nil during the same period last year.

⁸ Mainly due to a decrease in exports to Syria by US\$ 8 million.

Table 1: Trade activity by value

(US\$ millions)	2019	2020	% Change	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change
	Feb	Feb	Feb 2020/2019	Jan- Feb	Jan- Feb	Jan- Feb	Jan- Feb	Jan- Feb	Jan-Feb 2020/2019
Imports	1,364	951	-30%	2,908	3,375	3,141	2,769	2,105	-24%
<i>of which mineral fuel & oil</i>	242	291	20%	720	1,009	512	499	748	50%
-EDL registered fuel imports	-	84	NA	389	489	22	-	255	NA
-Non EDL fuel imports	242	207	-14%	330	520	490	499	493	-1%
<i>of which Unwrought & semi-manufactured gold, diamonds, precious stones & metals</i>	84	117	40%	144	224	242	163	208	28%
Exports	300	343	14%	414	456	531	536	676	26%
<i>of which Unwrought gold, un-mounted diamond, & precious metals</i>	120	157	31%	70	110	175	199	316	59%
Trade Balance	-1,064	-608	-43%	-2,494	-2,919	-2,609	-2,233	-1,428	-36%

Source: Directorate General of Customs, Ministry of Finance

Table 2: Trade activity by volume

(Millions of kgs)	2019	2020	% Change	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change
	Feb	Feb	Feb 2020/2019	Jan- Feb	Jan- Feb	Jan- Feb	Jan- Feb	Jan- Feb	Jan-Feb 2020/2019
Imports	1,077	885	-17.8%	3,083	3,941	2,405	2,230	2,085	-7%
<i>of which mineral fuel & oil</i>	430	529	23%	1,596	2,256	893	921	1,301	41%
-EDL registered fuel imports	-	165	NA	687	1,208	35	-	473	NA
-Non EDL fuel imports	430	364	-15%	908	1,048	858	921	828	-10%
<i>of which Unwrought & semi-manufactured gold, diamonds, precious stones & metals (Kgs)</i>	52,286	39,004	-25%	149,661	187,734	336,852	105,180	53,637	-49%
Exports	108	143	32%	228	321	323	220	281	28%
<i>of which Unwrought gold, un-mounted diamond, & precious metals (Kgs)</i>	6,314	3,679	-42%	6,478	7,812	6,432	11,256	28,225	151%
Trade Balance	-970	-743	-23%	-2,855	-3,620	-2,082	-2,010	-1,804	-10%

Source: Directorate General of Customs, Ministry of Finance

Table 3: IMPORT Distribution by Product (in US\$ million)

Rank	Product	Jan-Feb 2019	% Share	Jan-Feb 2020	% Share	Value Change	% Change
1	Mineral fuels and oils	499	18%	748	36%	249	50%
2	Unwrought & semi-manufactured gold, diamonds, precious stones & metals	163	6%	208	10%	45	28%
3	Pharmaceutical products	205	7%	187	9%	-19	-9%
4	Aircraft engines, Boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances	184	7%	75	4%	-109	-59%
5	Vehicles and accessories, cranes & lorries	187	7%	72	3%	-115	-62%
6	Live animals	45	2%	61	3%	17	37%
7	Electrical machinery and equipment	153	6%	60	3%	-93	-61%
8	Cereals	55	2%	54	3%	0	-1%
9	Plastics and articles thereof	94	3%	39	2%	-56	-59%
10	Articles of apparel and clothing	70	3%	36	2%	-34	-49%
	Other	1,114	40%	565	27%	-549	-49%
	Total	2,769	100%	2,105	100%	-664	-24%

Table 4: EXPORT Distribution by Product (in US\$ million)

Rank	Product	Jan-Feb 2019	% Share	Jan-Feb 2020	% Share	Value Change	% Change
1	Unwrought & semi-manufactured gold, diamonds, precious stones & metals	199	37%	316	47%	117	59%
2	Aircraft engines, Boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances	25	5%	28	4%	3	12%
3	Electrical machinery and equipment	25	5%	23	3%	-2	-8%
4	Edible fruit and nuts	14	3%	22	3%	8	59%
5	Preparations of vegetable	21	4%	22	3%	0	2%
6	Iron and steel	7	1%	22	3%	15	215%
7	Essential oils and resinoids	18	3%	19	3%	2	9%
8	Plastics and articles thereof	26	5%	17	3%	-9	-36%
9	Aluminium and articles thereof	10	2%	12	2%	3	26%
10	Paper and paperboard	10	2%	11	2%	0	3%
	Other	182	34%	185	27%	4	2%
	Total	536	100%	676	100%	141	26%



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